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North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and

President

National Association of State Directors

Of Special Education (NASDSE)

Alexandria, Virginia

Hearing of the

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and

Human Services, Education and Related

Agencies

March 18, 2009

10:00 a.m.

This testimony describes the individual components of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and addresses the need for increasing the appropriations for each component for FY 10.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mary Watson, Director of the Exceptional Children Division for the Department of Public Instruction for the State of North Carolina. I am here in my capacity as the President of the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. NASDSE is the national not-for-profit association that has represented the state directors of special education in the states, federal territories, the Department of Defense, the Bureau of Indian Education and the Freely Associated States since 1938. I thank you on behalf of NASDSE for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to talk about funding for special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I first want to thank you for including support for special education in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The \$12.2 billion targeted specifically for IDEA and the option to use the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds for special education will support some of the critical initiatives that are producing positive outcomes for students with disabilities that states are trying to implement and scale-up, but have lacked the fiscal resources with which to do so.

While the ARRA funds will help states in the short term, our members and their local special education colleagues remain concerned about the long term funding picture for IDEA. As you know, funding for IDEA is broken out into four broad categories: the Part B grants to states; the Section 619 pre-school program; the Part C infant/toddler

program and the Part D technical assistance program. My testimony will briefly address funding for each of these programs.

Part B Grants to States. The Part B program, which serves children with disabilities ages 3-21, is the largest component of IDEA and as such, it gets the most attention from this Committee, which has continued to provide incremental increases over the past few years as well as the ARRA funding that has literally doubled funding for the Part B program. Unfortunately, the huge increase provided by the ARRA will only last for two years. Half of the students with disabilities will not go away in FY 10 or FY 11 after the ARRA funds are gone and that is why it is so important that you continue your commitment to significantly increase funding for the Part B program in FY 10. We note that when IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, the authorizers spoke about putting IDEA on a 'glide path' to full funding. Unfortunately, we are not close to those glide path numbers even as we are nearing the reauthorization date for the IDEA. We urge the Committee to appropriate funding for Part B for FY 10 that will bring it closer to the goal of full funding. To move towards this goal, we ask for an appropriations level of \$15.7 billion.

Section 619. The Section 619 program, which serves children ages 3-5, received \$400 million in funding in the ARRA, but as is true for the Part B funding, these are short term funds that will only last for two years. Funding for Section 619 has either stagnated or been cut over the past few years. President Obama has noted the importance of pre-K programs in improving educational outcomes for all children and Secretary Duncan has listed improving and expanding pre-K programs as one of his priorities. To ensure that all children get off to a good start and come to school ready to learn, we believe that it is

critically important that children with disabilities have this same access to high quality pre-K programs that are specifically designed to support their individual needs. We note that Section 619 was level funded in FY 09, which represents a cut in funding due to the across-the-board spending cuts in the FY 08 appropriations. We therefore urge you to provide a 10% funding increase for the Section 619 program, which would raise funding for the program to \$412 million.

Part C. The Part C program, which serves infants and toddlers from birth through age 2, received \$500 million in the ARRA and in contrast to the 619 program, has seen modest increases in funding over the past few years. There is compelling evidence that indicates that if services are received early on, they can help to mitigate the services required at a later date, thus reducing the costs of special education when children enter school. But it is not just for this reason that we urge an increase in funding for this program. When infants and toddlers are identified at such a young age, their disabilities tend to be more severe and their parents may need help in learning to care for them. It is important that these children be identified and that services be provided as soon as possible. While this Committee increased funding slightly for the Part C program in FY 09, we request that the Committee consider increasing funding for the Part C program to \$482 million for FY 10 in recognition of the importance of identifying and meeting the needs of this young and vulnerable population.

Part D. The Part D programs provide invaluable support to the state education agencies and through them to the local education agencies. I would like to specially mention two programs of critical importance to the state directors:

- The **Regional Resource Center programs** that are funded through the technical assistance and dissemination (TA&D) line item in Part D. These centers over the years have provided invaluable ‘hands on’ support to the states, including on-site support, document review, assistance with preparation for monitoring visits and specific targeted assistance. Not enough can be said about the value of their partnership with the state directors of special education.
- The **State Personnel Development Grants (SPDGs)**. From my own personal experience, I want to thank you for restoring funding for the SPDGs in the FY 09 Omnibus bill that President Obama just signed into law. The support that the state directors have through the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Program’s SPDG program is critical to supporting personnel programs in special education throughout the country.
 - Across the states, SPDG funding is used for a variety of purposes. Just to give you a feeling for how SPDG funds are used: Forty-one states use their funds for differentiating instruction; 35 for induction and mentoring; 23 for leadership development; 35 for professional development; 27 for progress monitoring; 36 for reading/literacy; 38 for scaling up best practices; 37 for family engagement; 26 for early childhood; 12 for low-incidence disabilities, including autism. The Department of Education maintains a website, www.signetwork.org, where you can find a chart that depicts how SPDG funds are being used in all the states.
 - In the remaining minute that I have, I’d like to share some data from North Carolina’s SPDG or State Improvement Grant (SIG education programs).

Because of the professional development that was made possible with the SPDG funding, students with disabilities more than doubled the progress made by their nondisabled peers in reading over a five-year period.

Students with disabilities who were taught math by teachers trained with the SPDG funding increased by 27 percentage points as compared with three percentage points for other students. With respect to discipline, of schools implementing positive behavior supports using SPDG funds, office discipline referrals decreased significantly.

- In sum, the SPDG remains a critically important program for the states. NASDSE requests that you return the SPDG program to its original funding level of \$50 million.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal testimony. I thank you on behalf of NASDSE for the opportunity to appear before you this morning to talk about funding for special education programs. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the Committee may have.

Mary N. Watson
Director
Exceptional Children Division
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

Mary Watson is the Director of the Exceptional Children Division with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Prior to her current position, Mary served as Section Chief for the Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section of the Exceptional Children Division. She began her career in the North Carolina public school system in 1972 following graduation from Appalachian State University with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. She went on to complete Masters degree programs in Elementary Education, Exceptional Children and Administration. Mary has teaching experience in the areas of preschool, elementary and middle schools regular and special education and adult education. She has also worked as the Title VI B grant administrator for the State of North Carolina, a compliance consultant and as a regional consultant for special education. Mary has a passion for children and is dedicated to the provision of quality educational experiences for all children.

Mary and her husband, Ed, live in Raleigh, North Carolina. They have two grown children.

**National Association of State Directors of Special
Education
Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards for
the 15-month Period Ended September 30, 2008**

Direct Grants:	Project Title	Grant Number	Federal Expenditures
(1) U.S. Department of Education	State/Federal Information Administrative Information Exchange Program (Forum)	H326F0500 01	\$ 529,567
(2) U.S. Department of Education	The IDEA Partnership Project	H326A030 002	2,506,943
(3) U.S. Department of Education	The IDEA Partnership Project - Pass through	H326A030 002	299,303
(4) U.S. Department of Education	The National Coordination and Dissemination Center to Improve Strategies for the Recruitment & Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities	H326P030 002	754,760
(5) U.S. Department of Education	Charter Schools Unsolicited Grants (TA Customizer)	U282U030 007A	349,157
Indirect Grants:			
(1) U.S. Department of Education	Council of Chief State School Officers - Center for Teacher Quality (INTASC)	H325M020 001	41,820
(2) U.S. Department of Education	National Center Secondary Transition and Post School Outcomes	Unknown	12,417
(3) U.S. Department of Education	The Technical Assistance Center on Assessment (Outcomes)	H326G050 007	50,128

